

## **Minutes of DAAC Meeting**

### **Attendance**

DAAC members present were Seren Derin, Chair; Irene Barrelet, Clerk; Joan Rising; Dana Goddard and Jim MacRostie.

Others present were Roy Rosenblatt, Director of Community Development; Jason Skeels, Town Engineer; Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner; Nathaniel Malloy, DAAC staff liaison; and members of the public Jane Gamache.

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### **Call to Order**

Chair Seren Derin called the meeting to order at 3:07 p.m.

### **Minutes**

Minutes from the November, 2008 meeting were reviewed and discussed. No corrections were found. Mr. Goddard made a motion to accept the minutes; Mr. MacRostie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to accept the November, 2008 minutes as submitted.

### **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Support Letter—Roy Rosenblatt**

Mr. Rosenblatt discussed projects that would be possible with CDBG money, in particular, the improvement of sidewalks to make Amherst's Town Center and Village Centers more accessible and walkable. He explained that if awarded the grant, the money could be used only to move sidewalks and remove barriers (to make them accessible), and not to make new sidewalks. The areas Mr. Rosenblatt would like to concentrate on, in partnership with the Department of Public Works, is the East Village Center and the Town Center. The distance between the centers is approximately 2/3 of a mile along Main Street, a major pedestrian and vehicular route. Since any location on Main Street is within walking distance of a village center (< 1/2 mile), sidewalks along this segment of the street can be improved with CDBG money. Improving the south sidewalk on Main Street also accommodates accessible housing located at Watson Farms Apartments and the Main Street Housing by Amherst Housing Authority.

Mr. Rosenblatt asked the DAAC to consider writing a letter stating its support for the sidewalk improvements. This letter would be submitted with the CDBG application due February 13, 2009.

### **Pomeroy Village Intersection Plans**

Jason Skeels, Town Engineer, and Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner, presented plans for the Pomeroy Village intersection and explained information about the history of the project as well as the latest plans for roadway, sidewalk and traffic-calming improvements. Ms. Brestrup explained that in the 1990's the State drafted plans for this area of Route 116, but Amherst found them to be too automobile oriented. The Town therefore took over management and design of Route 116 from Snell Street to the Notch, but as a state route, all plans must meet state standards. Ms. Brestrup also explained that the Design Review Board, appointed by the Town Manager to review plans for this intersection, determined three phases to the redevelopment of the streetscape and sidewalks of the Pomeroy Village Intersection:

- Phase I: Of highest priority is improving accessibility immediately at the intersection, which includes such elements as crosswalks, curb cuts, and manual light controls.

Phase II: Extend sidewalks further from the intersection— ½ mile away to stream crossings of Route 116 and Pomeroy Lane.

Phase III. Connect Pomeroy Intersection with the Village Center at the South Amherst Common.

The plans presented to the DAAC included the following:

- Bus stops (north and southbound on Route 116) moved north to a location near Dancer Computer;
- Bus stops to include a 10-foot long section of the sidewalk that is ramped to be level with the road surface, for wheelchair boarding of buses (they will be ‘kneeling’ buses with accessible door at the front of the bus);
- A crosswalk added to allow crossing of West Street at the new bus stop location (crosswalk will not use in-ground flashing lights or flashing bollards);
- An easement across land of Gerry Gates (north of the former apple storage building) to allow direct access from Pomeroy Court Coop to the new bus stops;
- Splitter islands added 1,000 feet north and south of the intersection to slow traffic as it enters the Village Center area. These islands are approximately 4 feet wide and 100 feet long;
- Turning lanes (10 feet wide) added, north and southbound, to allow turns onto Pomeroy Lane from West Street without impeding the flow of through traffic;
- Four or five foot wide bike lanes along West Street, northbound and southbound;
- New 6” granite curbing to be added along roads and the perimeter of parking lots in and around the intersection;
- Curb cuts added at all four corners of the intersection;
- Pedestrian-operated manual crossing controls installed at all four corners;
- Crosswalks installed on both legs of Pomeroy Lane and both legs of West Street (Route 116) at the intersection;
- Crosswalk materials to match crosswalks in the Downtown area (concrete, with brick soldier course and flush granite edging and reflective white paint stripes on the outside edges for maximum visibility to drivers);
- New 5 foot wide sidewalks (concrete with brick soldier-course edging) installed as follows:
  - From the northeast corner (Hess Station), westbound to Pomeroy Court Coop driveways;
  - From the southeast corner (Kumon and Montessori), southbound to 500 West Street Courtyard Condominiums;
  - From the southwest corner (Sibie’s) westbound to the driveway into the Sibie’s parking lot;
  - From the northeast corner (Hess Station), northbound to the new bus stop location in front of Dancer Computer.

- Existing sidewalks to be improved to be 5 feet wide and repaved (concrete with brick soldier-course edging) as follows:
  - From Valley Transporter northbound to the second driveway at Amherst Office Park;
  - From Sibie's southbound to Glendale Road;
- All curb cuts to have raised indicators in the pavement for visually impaired pedestrians;
- South entrance into the Hess Station from West Street to be blocked; northern entrance into the Hess Station to remain open and be widened to approximately 50 feet, with a 5 foot wide island for pedestrian refuge installed in the middle of the entryway, including accommodation for wheelchair accessibility.

The DAAC had the following questions and concerns:

- Ms. Derin asked who uses the buses and Mr. Skeels responded that local residents from the nearby apartments are the main riders.
- Ms. Barrelet expressed the need for a crosswalk near the two bus stops north of the intersection on West Street (Route 116) as it is too far for people to walk to the intersection if they need to transfer to another bus across the street.
- Mr. Weiss, via email, shared his concern that the addition of turning lanes would actually increase driver speed near the intersection.
- Ms. Barrelet said she prefers the crosswalk signals that count down with numbers, rather than just beeps, as pedestrians know exactly how much time remains during the walk signal. She asked if the turning lanes were necessary and cited the Amity Street/ University Drive intersection as a good example of staggered lights and narrow streets that are pedestrian-friendly. Mr. Skeels responded that the intersection actually has a low score in terms of level of service, and that its functionality deters drivers from using University Drive although it is designed to handle large volumes of traffic; drivers instead use residential streets such as Lincoln Street.
- Mr. Malloy asked if right-hand turns on red would be allowed, referencing the Route 9/ South Pleasant Street intersection where a woman who is visually impaired has filed complaints with the Town Manager because drivers do not look for pedestrians when they turn right on red.
- Ms. Rising explained that with the granite curbing and no street parking, 4-foot wide bike lanes (proposed by the Public Transportation Committee) would feel narrow and perhaps dangerous to cyclists. Mr. Skeels responded that as an avid cyclist who often totes a child caboose, 4 feet is an ample width.
- Mr. MacRostie expressed concern over the timeframe for the project because if new curbs and curb cuts are installed, but it is year(s) before the new sidewalks are constructed, there will be more barriers than the existing conditions (there are no curbs now).
- Ms. Derin inquired about the project budget, which Mr. Skeels estimated to be \$1 million for the paving and streetlights, excluding landscaping and bus shelters.
- Ms. Derin noted that as a driver, turning lanes on West Street (Route 116) would be nice and facilitate traffic through the intersection.
- Ms. Rising asked how much truck traffic there currently is at the Pomeroy Intersection. Her concern is that improving the intersection, even if intended to improve pedestrian accessibility, would attract more truck traffic. Mr. Skeels responded that the nearby gravel

pits on the notch and other local industries already use the intersection, and that as a state route it is busy with truck traffic. Although a traffic study had not singled-out truck traffic, Mr. Skeels believes that improving the intersection will not result in more trucks.

- Ms. Derin expressed her concern with the large entry/exit into the Hess gas station from Route 116. She believed that even with the island, crossing this entrance would be more dangerous than crossing Route 116. Mr. Skeels explained that by adding one-way entry and exit lanes, and with the new curbs and sidewalks, cars would be travelling more slowly and responsibly from the gas station, and pedestrians could wait in the island if there was too much traffic to make it across the entrance.

The DAAC expressed support for the plans as presented, with the following recommendations:

1. If turning lanes are installed the crossing time for pedestrians and those in wheelchairs (the “walk” period of the lights) should be extended to allow for the additional distance that needs to be crossed;
2. “No Turn on Red” signs should be installed to prevent right turns into the path of pedestrians in the crosswalks;
3. Consideration should be given to installing bus stops south of the intersection, in the vicinity of Glendale Road, to accommodate those living south of the intersection. (Mr. Skeels stated that he thinks there is an existing bus stop in the vicinity of Glendale Road.)
4. Maintain full five-foot width going from sidewalk to curb cuts (do not narrow the travel path of the curb cuts).

### **683 Main Street (Main Street Housing by Amherst Housing Authority on Watson Farms Road)**

Mr. Malloy explained that the Architectural Access Board had mailed the Town a variance request for 683 Main Street. The application states that the variance is sought for an existing new structure to allow the front entrance of two Group 1 units to be inaccessible, as it is up stairs. The side entrances to these units are accessible with a paved ramp to the landing area. Group 1 units are visitable units that can be converted to fully accessible units without structural change. Mr. Malloy described the details of the variance application and that he was told by the AAB they would hear the case at their January 5, 2009 meeting.

After discussing the request, the The DAAC voted to not recommend the variance for safety issues, especially if the only accessible entrance was blocked during an emergency. Ms. Derin made a motion to not recommend the variance, Ms. Barrelet seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous to not recommend the variance.

### **Private Parking Lots**

Mr. Malloy, after researching Mass General Law (MGL) and consulting with Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director, explained that there is no MGL ordinance a community can adopt to enforce HC parking restrictions on private lots outside the regular business hours of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Mr. Malloy described that the MGL clause referenced by Mr. Tringali at the previous meeting did not

allow ticketing on private lots because it builds upon MGL Ch. 90 Sec. 20A, which states that only violations occurring during regular office hours can be given notice.

Mr. Tucker explained to Mr. Malloy that Amherst could adopt a regulation whereby police and parking enforcement officers could ticket parking violators on private lots, regardless of the time of day; however, there may be solutions that are more amenable.

The DAAC discussed speaking with individual property owners, but also discussed attending a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce to present the idea of ticketing drivers after-hours on private property. The DAAC emphasized that there are relatively few HC spaces near downtown attractions, such as the Amherst Cinema and nearby restaurants.

The DAAC also asked about an agreement with the Town Manager and Bank of America which would allow bank employees to park behind the CVS on North Pleasant so that more public parking would be available in the lot adjacent to Amherst Cinema. Mr. Malloy said he would look into this agreement.

#### **Meeting Times**

At approximately 4:20 PM, Mr. Tringali, Vice-chair, called from the Boltwood Parking Lot explaining that no HC spaces were available. He was unable to attend the meeting due to inadequate parking.

DAAC members discussed the problem of not enough HC spaces during meeting times, and recommended meetings be moved to Stavros off Route 9, as there is ample parking onsite. Mr. Malloy said he would ask if a public meeting could be held in a location other than town-owned property.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nathaniel Malloy, staff liaison